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Diana T Fritz 02/05/2007 04:46:53 PM From DB/Inbox: Search Results

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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 ABU DHABI 004009

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/07/14
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PARM](#) [MARR](#) [IZ](#) [TC](#)
SUBJECT: USAF LEADERSHIP MEETS WITH PRESIDENT OF UAE AND
CROWN PRINCE OF ABU DHABI

(U) Classified by Ambassador Michele J. Sison, reasons 1.4
(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: On November 7, Secretary of the Air Force Dr. James G. Roche, Chief of Staff of the Air Force General John P. Jumper, CENTAF Commander Lieutenant General Walter Buchanan, and the Ambassador paid their condolences to UAE President and Abu Dhabi Ruler Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan and his brother, Abu Dhabi Crown Prince and UAE Armed Forces Chief of Staff Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan. In an extraordinary show of friendship, Khalifa extended an invitation to the delegation to iftar, breaking the daily Ramadan fast together. End Summary.

Sincere Sorrow Over UAE's Loss

¶2. (U) Secretary Roche told both Sheikh Khalifa and Sheikh Mohammed that the UAE and the entire world lost a true visionary and that the late President would be deeply missed. General Jumper conveyed his great sorrow that the entire world had "lost a father." In her third visit to the President in three days, the Ambassador reiterated her heartfelt condolences on behalf of the American people. President Sheikh Khalifa thanked the U.S. for its steadfast friendship and told the USAF leaders that "it was a great gesture to come out to express your condolences."

¶3. (C) When the UAEG announced Sheikh Zayed's death on

November 2, it also announced that Sheikh Khalifa would receive condolences after Maghreb prayers (at sundown) for three days. Our contacts told us that the family had received 9,000 visitors on Wednesday, 9,000 visitors on Thursday, and 21,000 visitors on Saturday. To accommodate the crowds, Khalifa extended the condolence period, beyond the three days initially announced. With the exception of the Roche/Jumper visit, foreign delegations had not been invited to join the iftar meal during the mourning period. Our contacts explained that this gesture was intended to emphasize the strength of UAE - U.S. relationship.

Iraq Concerns

14. (S) Sheikh Khalifa asked Secretary Roche about the status of troops on the ground in Iraq, especially since the interim Iraqi regime had called a state of emergency. Secretary Roche explained that the American troops are

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well-trained and will do the job to the best of their ability. Sheikh Mohammed told SECAF and CSAF that an action in Fallujah must be carried out and that he believes that restoring peace and calm in Fallujah is key to success in Iraq. Sheikh Mohammed stated that, "the U.S. should have acted more forcibly sooner, but that you are doing the right thing now." The conversation transitioned to Saudi Arabia's effort to stamp out extremism.

15. (C) Sheikh Khalifa wanted to know if the US had any more information about Osama bin Laden since his tape surfaced just days before the American election. Secretary Roche said he had no further information. Khalifa wanted to know if the tape had an affect on the election to which Secretary Roche replied that it had strengthened the resolve of the American people to combat terrorism.

A Relaxed Khalifa

16. (C) A short post-iftar majlis gathering found Sheikh Khalifa and Sheikh Mohammed relaxed and comfortable in the presence of the American delegation, despite the obvious sadness they felt over the recent loss of their father. After sharing lighter conversation, Sheikh Khalifa noted through an interpreter that, "It is only by the grace and mercy of God that we can laugh with our friends during our time of sorrow." Embassy participants noted that he was relaxed enough with this delegation that he enjoyed a cigarette and extended a personal invitation to the visitors to bring their families out to vacation in the UAE.

COMMENT:

17. (C) Embassy participants noted that Sheikh Khalifa and Sheikh Mohammed appeared genuinely comfortable and relaxed when they were together. The much-rumored rivalry between the two half-brothers was not at all apparent, which bodes well for the future as this generation of Al Nahyans assumes full control of the government. Sheikh Mohammed clearly exuded a role of leadership, but often deferred to his older brother and always allowed him to speak first. Sheikh Mohammed was very comfortable speaking to the Air Force leadership in English during his own meetings, but used only Arabic and communicated through a translator when in the presence of Sheikh Khalifa. The warm and congenial atmosphere during this meeting with USAF leadership demonstrated the desire of the UAE's new President to continue and deepen our very close and cooperative bilateral relationship.

18. (U) SECAF and CSAF have cleared on this cable.
SISON